



# Regional Brownfields Assessment Pilot *Northwest Indiana Cities*

Outreach and Special Projects Staff (5101)

Quick Reference Fact Sheet

EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower States, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a site, or portion thereof, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. Between 1995 and 1996, EPA funded 76 National and Regional Brownfields Assessment Pilots, at up to \$200,000 each, to support creative two-year explorations and demonstrations of brownfields solutions. EPA is funding more than 27 Pilots in 1997. The Pilots are intended to provide EPA, States, Tribes, municipalities, and communities with useful information and strategies as they continue to seek new methods to promote a unified approach to site assessment, environmental cleanup, and redevelopment.

## BACKGROUND

EPA Region 5 selected the Cities of Gary, East Chicago, and Hammond in Indiana (known as Northwest Indiana), in partnership with EPA's Common Sense Initiative (CSI) Iron and Steel Sector Brownfields Workgroup, for a Regional Brownfields Pilot. This Pilot complements a geographic initiative being conducted by EPA's Region 5 and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) to respond to environmental degradation in Northwest Indiana. Northwest Indiana has been home to heavy industry for the last century. Major land use changes since the 1970s have resulted in downsizing of industry and creation of numerous brownfields in prime locations. Since 1980, industrial employment declined by 35 percent and population decreased by 18 percent. A combined total of 3,875 acres of abandoned industrial properties exist in Gary, East Chicago, and Hammond. Potential environmental liability, vague cleanup guidelines, and lack of financing are thwarting their reuse while the tax base shrinks and employment and property values fall. Working with the CSI Iron and Steel Brownfields Workgroup, site assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment issues particular to the industry in the region are being addressed.

## PILOT SNAPSHOT



*Northwest Indiana Cities*

**Date of Award:**  
July 1996

**Amount:** \$200,000

**Site Profile:** The Pilot targets brownfields formerly used in the iron and steel industries in the Cities of Gary, Hammond and East Chicago in Northwest Indiana.

### Contacts:

Kay Nelson  
Indiana Department of  
Environmental  
Management  
Northwest Office  
(219) 881-6712

Ted Smith  
U.S. EPA-Region 5  
(312) 353-6571  
smith.edwin@epamail.  
epa.gov

Visit the EPA Brownfields Website at:  
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields>

## OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the brownfields project are to identify and remove threats to health and safety, and restore brownfields impacted by the iron and steel industry to productive use. The project is dedicated to the restoration of the economic and environmental health of the three cities through a broad stakeholder partnership and extensive community involvement. The cities have identified three major aims: 1) identifying and removing threats to the health and safety of residents caused by environmental degradation at the brownfields; 2) restoring brownfields to productive use by appropriate cleanup; and 3) creating sustainable economic opportunities with new jobs while protecting the environment.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Pilot has:

- Selected one brownfields site in each of the three communities as focal points of the Pilot, with input from a series of public meetings. These sites are the West Point Industrial Park in Hammond, American Steel Foundries in East Chicago, and Gary Machine in Gary; and
- Publicized Pilot activities in a variety of ways including: a radio talk-show appearance by Pilot representatives; an article in *Barron's* magazine; and a cable TV program on the Pilot aired in January 1997.

The Pilot is:

- Coordinating with the EPA Common Sense Initiative Iron and Steel Sector Brownfields Workgroup and integrating the "Brownfields Guiding Principles," developed by the Workgroup into the Pilots' activities;
- Conducting site assessments of candidate redevelopment properties, and developing remediation plans and objectives;

- Evaluating existing remediation legal authorities and their impact on the redevelopment of the sites; and
- Developing a professional resource manual to promote information about and investment in brownfields redevelopment in Northwest Indiana.

## LEVERAGING OTHER ACTIVITIES

Experience with the Northwest Indiana Cities Pilot has been a catalyst for related activities including the following.

- IDEM has contributed \$200,000 to the Pilot to match EPA's funding.
- Based on the Pilot's community input process for site selection, the IDEM conducted site assessments on the American Steel and West Point Sites. IDEM has indicated that no remediation will be required.
- As a result of the Pilot's media efforts, relationships with a wide array of stakeholders were developed. Four individuals representing major redevelopment projects in the area have contacted the Pilot requesting the Pilot's participation and assistance.